

PROPOSAL

May 28, 1975

OPENING OF INTERNATIONAL RAILROAD FROM AFRICA TO ASIA AND EUROPE THROUGH ISRAEL

I suggest that the Israel government will offer, as a peace-inducing gesture, to reopen the railroad between Egypt and Lebanon to civilian traffic. That could be done at the time of the reopening of the Suez Canal on June 5, 1975, as a response to that decision by the Egyptian government. The Canal and the railroad physically form a crossroad of international transportation.

The railroad has been in operation for many years before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Some of the track within Israel is still being used and part of the infrastructure has not been dismantled.

After being rehabilitated and upgraded, including filling in of gaps throughout various Arab countries, the railroad could offer a unique land link between three continents. The Arab and other countries in Africa could be connected with the following: the Arab countries in the Asian Near and Middle East; Europe (through Turkey and Syria); the Soviet Union (through either Turkey or Iraq and Iran); India and other Asian countries (through Iran and Pakistan).

Distances are consistent with those covered by trans-European or trans-American trains which are competitive with sea transportation for many goods and partially for passengers. Container arrangements may be considered. Tourism might develop as well.

The railroad opening will bring Israel and the Arab countries jobs and investments in equipment and infrastructure.

Financing can be undertaken by an American-Arab-Israeli concern, or, as an alternative, by a wide international concern including the European countries and the Soviet Union. That will be a classical candidate for financing by the World Bank, Exim Bank of the United States and other major official and governmental financing bodies, with a sizeable contribution from oil funds.

Reopening of the railroad will have a political stabilizing influence in the area not only for the reasons expressed above, but also as a partial counter-weight to the Suez Canal. Both Israel and Egypt will be interested to maintain correct relations and to properly use and price their international way of transportation, in order to induce the other party to act likewise. More over the railroad will enliven civilian activities in war-prone areas, as Port Said, El Arish, Gaza and Southern Lebanon.

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If there is an interest in the above proposal, I am ready to prospect this matter with American and other financial and railroad organizations, in cooperation with your representatives.

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